Growth of paper industry

*216. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether paper industry is growing at a fast pace;

(b) whether it is proposed to accord "core industry" status to paper industry;

(c)if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The paper industry is growing at a steady pace.

(b) to (d) The paper industry has already been categorized by the Ministry of Coal as falling under the "Core Sector" for consumption and use, for supply of coal from the coal producing subsidiaries under Coal India Limited and Singareni Collieries Company Limited.

Scheme to rejuvenate tea gardens

†*217. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any scheme is under consideration of Government to rejuvenate tea gardens and maintain their greenery as well;

(b) whether any fund is being created for this purpose; and

(c) if so, what snail be the outline of this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) The Indian tea industry is seriously affected by the high cost of production and near stagnation in productivity due to old age of the tea bushes. Government is examining ways and means of introducing a programme for massive replantation and rejuvenation of old tea bushes. The objective of this programme is to address the issue of ageing tea plantations which has resulted in a progressive reduction in yield and help in reviving the fortunes of the Indian tea industry in terms of increase in

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

yield, improvement in quaiity and in overall reduction in cost of production. The detailed costing and modalities of funding such a large programme, including the setting up of a Special Purpose Tea Fund, is under consideration.

Assistance for watershed development schemes

*218. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central Government are providing substantial amount to the States for the implementation of watershed development schemes;

(b) if so, the State-wise details for the last three years thereof;

(c) whether Central Government or any other agency conducted any study about the increase of underground water table in those areas where the above said scheme is under implementation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) The Central Government has considerably increased the resources allocated for the development of degraded lands, and as a result the number of projects sanctioned and the area covered have also gone up considerably. Since 1995-96 till 2004-05, the Department of Land Resources has released Rs. 4353.41 crores under the 3 Area Development Programmes namely Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP) for the treatment of 226.105 lakh hectares to the States. During the last three years i.e. 2002-03 to 2004-05, an amount of Rs. 2318.13 crores has been released to the States for the treatment of 24.597 lakh hectares under IWDP, 37.815 lakh hectares under DPAP and 23.82 lakh hectares under DDP. States-wise and programme-wise release of funds for ongoing as well as new projects are given in Statement I (See below).

(c) and (d) Impact Assessment Studies have been conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in 221 districts of 16 States covering 146 projects under IWDP, 4805 projects under DPAP and 1190 projects under DDP. The impact assessment studies have revealed that overall productivity